

MACHINES IN CHEKHOV'S FICTION

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Abstract

WILLIAM JUSTIN MORGAN: Machines in Chekhov's Fiction
(Under the direction of Radislav Lapushin)

This thesis analyzes numerous depictions of machines found throughout Anton Chekhov's short stories and dramatic works. Primary emphasis is placed on the portrayal of factories, steamships, and trains, because they are the quintessential machines representing man's technological progress in the late nineteenth century. This analysis highlights the complexity of Chekhov's machine imagery and sheds light on the positive implications for modernity raised by the portrayal of these behemoths of iron and steam. Overall, readers will find that this research breaks with prior literary criticism that largely discusses technology and modernity in Chekhov from a pessimistic perspective.

To my loving parents James and Deborah Morgan

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Note on Citation and Translation

As a rule, all quotations longer than two lines will be provided in the original Russian with a parallel translation. Unless otherwise noted, translations of Chekhov's prose are by Constance Garnett. For the convenience of readers, Garnett's translations are cited from <http://chekhov2.tripod.com> where they are placed in chronological order.

Shorter quotations no more than two lines will only appear as a translation. Unless otherwise cited, these shorter translations are by Constance Garnett. All translations by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky are cited with the accompanying page number from the 2000 edition of Chekhov's *Stories*. Furthermore, all English translations from the major dramatic works of Chekhov come from Laurence Senelick's translation of his complete plays.

Also, all the original Russian quotations come from the *Полное собрание сочинений и писем*, 30 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1974-1982). Readers can find these citations on the web at <http://chekhov.niv.ru> where Chekhov's short works are listed in alphabetical order with the major dramatic works listed in a separate left hand column.

Finally, the original publication dates for each work are only noted with the first appearance of said work.

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Introduction

In a letter dated March 27, 1894, to A. S. Suvorin, Chekhov writes that "prudence and fairness tell me that there is more love for humanity in electricity and steam than in chastity and abstention from meat" (Yarmolinsky 245). Here, Chekhov wittily rejects Tolstoy's "strong opposition" to progress in favor of the possible fruits offered to mankind by technological and industrial development.¹ Chekhov's strong affinity for the promise of a better future through technological modernity can be traced to his personal involvement as a physician in medicine. The field of medicine in late nineteenth century Europe was evolving at an unprecedented pace. News of new medical discoveries from France, Britain, and Germany could be quickly disseminated to Moscow and Petersburg because of developing telegraph lines and railway networks. As a young and upcoming doctor of the eighteen eighties, Chekhov was able to witness firsthand the rapid pace of research and technological innovation taking place in the late nineteenth century medical field. His personal optimism for medical advancement is palpable in "Ward no. 6" («Палата No. 6») (1892), where Dr. Andrei Yefimych rejoices at the great strides taking place in medicine.

¹See Baehr, who writes that this letter to A.S. Suvorin "sounds almost like a preliminary sketch for *The Cherry Orchard*" in his essay "The Machine in Chekhov's Garden" (99-100).

When he reads at night, medicine touches him and arouses astonishment and even rapture in him. Indeed what unexpected splendor, what a revolution! Owing to antiseptics, such operations are performed as the great Pirogov considered impossible even *in spe*.² ... only one Caesarean section ends in death, gallstones are considered ... a trifle... Syphilis can be radically cured... (Volkhonsky 189)

Когда он читает по ночам, медицина трогает его и возбуждает в нем удивление и даже восторг. В самом деле, какой неожиданный блеск, какая революция! Благодаря антисептике, делают операции, какие великий Пирогов считал невозможными даже *in spe*... на сто чревосечений один только смертный случай, а каменная болезнь считается таким пустяком... Радикально излечивается сифилис.

Here, readers can garner a good sense of the "astonishment" and "unexpected splendor" that Chekhov himself felt in watching the maturation of his own profession.³ The enthusiasm for innovation and improvement illustrated by this passage resonates with the personal views Chekhov espouses in his letters to friends and colleagues. In a letter dated February 22, 1899 to I. I. Orlov, Chekhov declares that "science is steadily advancing, self awareness is growing, moral issues are beginning to assume an unquiet character, etc." (id at 336). Scientific advancement, which is undoubtedly related to and helped along by technological advancement, is uttered in the same breath as a "growing" sense of self-awareness

²"in spe" is Latin for "in the future." See Volkhonsky 461, note # 8.

³In a letter dated January 17, 1887, to his brother, Chekhov wrote that medicine was his "wife" and literature his "mistress" fully accentuating the impact of the medical profession on his life. See. Yarmolinsky 44.

and attention to moral issues. Thus, modernity and morality are not mutually exclusive terms, but rather technological advancement can run concomitant with self-awareness and morality. These views highlight Chekhov's personal willingness to embrace modernity despite the technological pitfalls of the industrial age.

Chekhov is often credited with creating a fictional universe that captures the world of "everyday" life in late nineteenth century Russia in vivid detail. The world he paints for readers is one in a state of great fluctuation. Chekhov, as a member of the generation born in 1860, had a front row seat for the dawning industrial age with all of its possibilities and pitfalls. Industrial forces that had already brought change in Western Europe were then being brought to bear in less-developed Russia. These forces ushered in an age of giant metal machines for transportation, manufacturing, and agriculture. They are associated with the new market-driven economics that were often at odds with Russia's intransigent landholding aristocracy. Historians and critics often underestimate the extent to which Russia was experiencing rapid industrial modernization. According to historical statistics from Chekhov's lifetime, Russia was modernizing at a faster pace than any other major power except Japan (Fisher 5). Shortly before his birth in 1860, there were little over 1,000 miles of track, but by the time of his death there were over 40,000 miles. This development is reflected in many of Chekhov's works, ("The Country Cottage" («Дачники») (1885), "Cold Blood" («Холодная Кровь») (1887), *The Steppe* («Степь») (1888), "The Murder" («Убийство») (1889), *The Cherry Orchard* («Вишневый сад») (1904), to name a few), by an abundance of train references and depictions. In addition to the nation's growing transportation infrastructure,

Russia's output of coal, iron, steel, and textiles rose spectacularly; both domestic and foreign trade was growing; and electricity was transforming urban life (id at 4). The growth of industry and factory towns is reflected in Chekhov's numerous depictions of factories and the social world surrounding them ("A Doctor's Visit" («Случай из практики») (1892), "A Woman's Kingdom" («Бабые царство») (1892), "In the Ravine" («В овраге») (1889), to name a few). Finally, the explosion of industrial growth was simultaneous with a changing state of affairs for Russia's landholding nobility as well. In 1860, the aristocracy had held some fifty percent of Russia's cultivable land, but by 1905 that figure had dropped to some thirty percent. Once again, Chekhov grapples with this changing economic and social reality for the landed classes in *The Cherry Orchard* (1904). Suffice to say, the arrival of industrial age modernity was a common theme explored by Chekhov in his fiction.⁴

Thus far, this introduction has painted Chekhov as an almost unbridled proponent of progress and technological advancement. While it is fair to say that on a personal level he did embrace modernity with open arms, the final disposition of his fictional works in reference to the question of technological modernity is far more complex. Chekhov's willingness to embrace "steam" and "electricity" should not be construed as an uncritical acceptance of technological modernity. Often, his representation of machines such as factories,⁵ steamships, and locomotives evokes

⁴Critics have noted a deeper desire on Chekhov's part in his later prose to explore the socio-psychological. Chekhov's physically rigorous journey by steamer in 1890 to the prison colony Sakhalin evinces this desire to grapple with and explore social problems. See Chudakov "Dr. Chekhov: a biographical essay" 10-11; Clayman 23-25; and Conrad 273-287.

⁵In Chekhov's fiction factories are often described with reference to steam, metal, heat, noise, and smoke. This is the same terminology that is used in describing steamships and

images of gargantuan metal beasts, hellish machinery, and natural destruction. Critics have picked up on these images and often write that Chekhov's fiction characterizes technological modernity in pessimistic terms, calling it the "violence of the modern technological era."⁶ Some, like Leonid Grossman, go as far as to say that he presented readers with a joyless philosophy for life.⁷ This alleged depiction of life as "joyless" in an age of "technological violence" in Chekhov's fiction is not easily reconciled with the man's personal views, and appears to present a paradox for readers. How is it that a man, who is a champion of science and technology, can create a fictional world that showcases "machines" in negative light? Readers should be cautioned against accepting this overly conclusive view of how technology, and more specifically how machines are portrayed in his works. This thesis will explore the representation of machines in Chekhov and show that this overly pessimistic view fails to properly appreciate the complexity with which machines are represented in his work. More specifically, I will show that machines are not simply frightening symbols of industrial age modernity, and that the dark

locomotives, thereby, evoking a kindred symbolism for modernity between these three representatives of technological progress. Therefore, the factory, which is normally just a workspace with machinery, becomes an entity defined by its similarities to late nineteenth century machines.

⁶See Lindheim 57, who specifically mentions the steamship from "Gusev" as a representative of violent technology. See also, Fisher 5, who talks of "the sadness that pervades much of his writing" in an underappreciated period of creative freedom and industrial modernization. Also, see Gassner 181-183, who points out that there has been a widespread trend to associate him with "moribund, negativistic modernity."

⁷See Grossman 34-37, who argues that Chekhov's medical career and Darwinian ideas made him into a pessimist and heavily influenced his writing; Also, see Journal of Charles du Bois 184-191, where it is argued that Chekhov's "grandeur" lay in his negativity (because he did not feel that he possessed faith or reason enough to express a positive outlook in his writing)

imagery often associated with them exists for reasons largely unrelated to the machine itself. In addition, it will be shown that a positive potential exists between man, nature, and machine that goes largely unnoticed by critics.

CHAPTER I

Why the Negativity?

My analysis of machines in Chekhov will begin with an exploration of the negative portrayals commonly used to support a pessimistic assessment of modernity in Chekhov's literary world.⁸ Following this section, we will more fully expose the subtle complexities raised by these depictions that are often ignored by critics. Factories, steamships, and trains are the quintessential machines representing man's technological progress of the late nineteenth century. In the literary world of Chekhov their presence coincides with destruction of the natural landscape, a venomous effect on the social order built around them, and may even invoke diabolical imagery. We will explore this broad and apparently negative representation of the machine in Chekhov. The purpose of this survey is to shed light on why critics are often hasty in interpreting these depictions of industrial age machinery as part of a prevailing pessimistic attitude towards modernization and technology. This is a view that will later be shown as failing to capture the subtle yet complex system of imagery Chekhov uses.

⁸Ecological disaster and the poverty caused by factory life are common sources of contention for critics arguing that modernity and technology in Chekhov are mostly adverse. See Winner, especially his discussion of "A Woman's Kingdom" and "A Doctor's Visit" lamenting the deplorable conditions of the common worker. (123-137). Also see Kataev 195, who mentions the factory atmosphere as one creating the "impression of hell" and Bill 160-162, on the deleterious effects of industrial modernity.

Destruction of the surrounding natural environment is arguably the most readily visible area in which the negative effects of industrial modernity are apparent in Chekhov's work. Valentine Bill points out in his essay on *Nature in Chekhov*, that Chekhov vividly painted the ruinous effects brought about by "man's activities" in the modern age on the natural Russian landscape (161). The scenes of natural destruction presented in "In the Ravine" (1900), showcase the effects of industrial pollution in Chekhov's fiction. Here, the town of Ukleyevo's natural landscape comes under continuous assault from the local tannery:

The water in the river often stank on account of the tannery; the waste contaminated the meadows, the peasants' cattle suffered from anthrax, and the factory was ordered closed. (Volkhonsky 383-84)

От кожевенной фабрики вода в речке часто становилась вонючей; отбросы заражали луг, крестьянский скот страдал от сибирской язвы, и фабрику приказано было закрыть.

The narrator's succinct summary of the tannery's deleterious affects allows readers to envision a natural landscape and local population utterly devastated by the industrial waste. The inclusion of the river's "stench" gives the added effect of not only painting a ruined landscape for readers, but also of evoking a sense of smell. The tannery's harmful effects on the surrounding landscape are echoed in various other short stories. "Fish Love" (1892) is a humorous short story about a fish that waits and watches for the object of his affection, Sonia Mamochkina, to come and bathe down by the pond every day. The love-struck carp is able to see all of Sonia

Mamochkina's actions despite living in a pond whose color has turned coffee brown because of the nearby Krandel Sons Foundry. The theme of water pollution continues in "Gooseberries" (1898), part of Chekhov's "Little Trilogy." This serious and thought-provoking tale concerning social injustice and the quest for fulfillment in life centers around the estate purchased by Nikolai Ivanovich. The description of his newly acquired estate features an obvious reference to the effects of water pollution. The estate's central river runs coffee brown because of the nearby brick factory and bone-processing plant. The stained water obscures the river's natural beauty and resonates with the short work's largely negative portrayal of Nikolai Ivanovich and his estate. Lastly, the effects of industrial pollution continue to be felt in "A Medical Case" (1898).⁹ Here, the young doctor Korolev pays a house call to a wealthy family of industrial capitalists in order to treat their young daughter Liza. Upon arriving at the factory complex, Korolev is greeted by a world covered in "gray" factory soot that has the effect of obscuring the local scenery. The depressing effect of a landscape tainted by manufacturing waste contributes to the story's gloomy tone as Korolev finds himself surrounded by multitudes of unclean workers. These stories, though unrelated in subject matter and sometimes mood (as in the case of the humorous "Fish Love"), all contain similar illustrations of industrial pollution.¹⁰ They establish a repeating pattern of natural destruction occurring in close proximity to industrial modernization. Thus, a negative association with

⁹The original title of this work "Случай из Практики" is frequently rendered in English as either "A Doctor's Visit" or "A Medical Case."

¹⁰Generally, this thesis does not attempt to analyze Chekhov's works from a chronological perspective. Chekhov's preoccupation with the ecological consequences of modernization date back to at least "The Reed Pipe" (1887) and *The Wood Demon* (1889).

machines in Chekhov's literary world is developed. This negative association, however, is not solely limited to the depiction of industrial modernization and its deleterious effects on nature.

Ralph Lindheim writes that machines in Chekhov can represent "the violence of the modern technological era" (57). As an example, he cites the steamship in "Gusev" («Гусев») (1890), aboard which an ex-soldier returning from the Far East is travelling as evidence of this technological violence. The steamship, a technological achievement that coincides with the late nineteenth century's land-based industrialization, is seen as a gargantuan metal monster plowing its way through the natural world:

The ship has a faceless and cruel expression. This beaked monster pushes on and cuts through millions of waves as it goes; it fears neither darkness, nor wind, nor space, nor solitude, it cares about nothing, and if the ocean had its own people, this monster would also crush them, saints and sinners alike. (Volkhonsky 119)

У парохода тоже бессмысленное и жестокое выражение. Это носатое чудовище прет вперед и режет на своем пути миллионы волн; оно не боится ни потемок, ни ветра, ни пространства, ни одиночества, ему всё нипочем, и если бы у океана были свои люди, то оно, чудовище, давило бы их, не разбирая тоже святых и грешных.

The ship's "cruel expression," metal "beak," and lack of "fear" to all that stands before it, impart a powerful bestial quality to the iron ship. The ship appears relevant to my earlier discussion in which machines, such as factories, can have a harmful effect on the environment around them. In this passage, one can get a sense

of the literal violence wrought by a metal monster cutting and slicing its way through the ocean's endless waves. Readers are given the impression that the ship's movement is powerful, violent, and perpetual. This is a continuous movement capable of destroying the ocean's own "saints" and "sinners" if they so existed. This vicious depiction of the steamship and its destructive movement reinforces the earlier theme touched upon by Bill in which proximity to technology has seemingly unavoidable adverse consequences for the natural world. Additionally, it adds a new layer of characterization because the machine itself is described in monstrous terms.

The characterization of machines in monstrous terms continues with the presentation of train locomotives. "The Country Cottage" (1885) is a humorous short work in which a pair of newlyweds must begrudgingly welcome their extended family to their country cottage. The story's beginning showcases the "happy" young couple's cheerful tone as they stand arm in arm on the railroad platform, but this loving tranquility is suddenly interrupted by the approach of the train bringing the visiting family members. The train's forward lamps are "three eyes of fire" and the locomotive itself is depicted as a "dark monster [creeping] noiselessly alongside the platform." The frightening nature of this locomotive depiction in an early humorous work is repeated in two later works dealing with darker themes, "Cold Blood" (1887)¹¹ and "The Murder" (1889). In "Cold Blood," Malahin and his son are transporting their cattle by rail to market. At the story's beginning, Malahin is finding his way to the locomotive in order to inquire about the

¹¹The original title "Холодная Кровь" ("Cold Blood") is frequently rendered in English as "The Cattle-Dealers."

train's delay at a small country station. In reaching the locomotive, he is greeted by a frightening sight:

He makes his way along beside the train to the engine, and after passing some two dozen vans sees a red open furnace; a human figure sits motionless facing it; its peaked cap, nose, and knees are lighted up by the crimson glow, all the rest is black and can scarcely be distinguished in the darkness.

Он пробирается вдоль поезда к локомотиву и, пройдя десятка два вагонов, видит раскрытую красную печь; против печи неподвижно сидит человеческая фигура; ее козырек, нос и колени выкрашены в багровый цвет, всё же остальное черно и едва вырисовывается из потемок.

The "red furnace," "crimson glow," "darkness," and "motionless figure" give readers the impression that either the train is diabolical or evil forces are in control of this great iron horse. This disconcerting and forbidding depiction is also echoed in "The Murder." After having participated in the murder of his brother Matvey, Yakov is detained by a passing cargo train while getting rid of the body. The two locomotives dragging the cargo train along are described as "breathing heavily, and flinging puffs of crimson fire out of their funnels." Once again, the locomotive takes on a beastly appearance that is wrapped in diabolical overtones. One can draw a parallel between these locomotive depictions and the steamship description in "Gusev." All of these descriptions share "monstrous" characteristics. They apparently personify bestial entities, who are devoid of compassion or sympathy for the surrounding environment. Moreover, the controlling force behind these machines is rather nebulous, but contains allusions to a devilish purpose. The diabolical imagery

presented in these depictions is further echoed in the portrayal of factories as will be shown below.

The representation of the machine as a destructive metal beast devoid of feelings from "Gusev" and the dark portrayal of the locomotive as a monster spewing crimson fire are highly reminiscent of factory descriptions given in the aforementioned "A Medical Case." There the protagonist, Korolev, describes the Liliakov factory complex in diabolical terms: "It seemed to him that the devil himself was gazing at him through those crimson eyes" (Volokhonsky 327). This observation by Korolev concerning the Lialikov factory complex is strikingly similar to the impressions offered by another protagonist, Anna Akhimovna, in "A Woman's Kingdom." Anna Akhimovna imagines her own factory, as a place of "massive iron girders... turning of wheels... clank of steel... and puffs of steam" giving her the impression of hell. The use of malevolent imagery in describing the factory gives readers the impression that these machines are akin to metal beasts. Though the imagery presented here is more overtly devilish than the "beak nosed monster" from "Gusev," the implications are much the same. Technological machines are destructive forces in both the natural world and in the world of man.

The aforementioned examples of machines as devilish monsters not only continue the theme of natural destruction, but also allude to the social implications of factory life. In "A Doctor's Visit" and "A Woman's Kingdom," the factory machine represents an integral part of the new capitalistic society being constructed in late nineteenth century Russia. This machine with its immense industrial possibilities, impacts not only the natural landscape but also the social community that grows

around it. This new capitalistic society is typified by the Lialikovs ("A Medical Case") and Anna Akimovna ("A Woman's Kingdom"). Vladimir Kataev explores Chekhov's "brutally honest" depictions of factory life in his book *If Only We Could Know* (Kataev 240). There, Kataev points out that these factory towns are rife with apparently "timid" and "deferential" workers, who humbly submit themselves to the whims of an unjustly enriched class (id). Korolev's carriage ride through the gates of the Lialikov factory complex captures the general social atmosphere that has cropped up around Chekhov's factories and the pitiable position of the average worker.

[A]nd now, as the workers deferentially and timorously stepped aside before the carriage, in their faces, caps and gait he could discern physical uncleanness, drunkenness, nervousness, perplexity. (Volokhonsky 322)

[И] теперь, когда рабочие почтительно и пугливо сторонились коляски, он в их лицах, картузах, в походке угадывал физическую нечистоту, пьянство, нервность, растерянность.

This excerpt captures the unjust social model that characterizes Chekhov's literary descriptions of factory town life in these later sketches. This description of factory life, however, is not without its own problems of interpretation. In the subsequent section on factories, we shall see that at least some of these highly negative descriptions of social inequality are more complicated than one would initially be led to believe. As Kataev points out, there is factual truth to these descriptions. However, we will see later that they can be muddled by the protagonist's state of

mind or be partially attributable to a momentary manifestation of the story's tone and spirit.

In general, this overview has shown that machines in Chekhov's fiction are often presented in a negative light. Frequently, they appear in monstrous terms with diabolical overtones, and especially in the case of factories, they may have a deleterious affect on the natural and social landscape surrounding them. The foregoing examples highlight the negative lens through which machines are frequently viewed. To reiterate Grossman, they contribute to what could be called a "joyless philosophy" of life presented in Chekhov's fiction, where man's existence is "infinitely simple, flat, without luster or color" (Grossman, 40). While this assertion by Grossman does not directly mention machines or modernization, it does encapsulate all the aforementioned discussion on its negative representation. This pessimistic assessment of Chekhov's literary works, while not entirely unwarranted, fails to adequately acknowledge the complexity of the works presented. The dark and sometimes sinister depictions of machines are not a final pejorative denouncement of technological advancement. This paper will closely re-examine many of the aforementioned depictions of machines in order to expose the complex nature of machines in Chekhov's fiction. A holistic analysis will reveal that the portrayal of machines is not wholly negative, and may even hint at the potentiality for viewing modernity in positive terms.

CHAPTER II

Factories: From Ruined Landscapes to Happy Workplace

First, we will reassess and go beyond the overly broad depiction of factories in Chekhov. As shown previously, factories are capable of producing deleterious effects in the natural and social orders that surround them. Unfortunately, critics often overlook the complex nature of the factory in Chekhov's literary landscape. Bill's article on the meaning of "Nature in Chekhov's Fiction" highlights this general willingness of critics to reduce Chekhov's dynamic factories to little more than harbingers of natural destruction (161).

First, let us revisit the earlier quotation from "In the Ravine," that highlights one of the worst examples of industrial pollution to be found in all of Chekhov. Bill cites the village of Ukleyevo to argue that the "factory was responsible for" the town's ecological devastation:

The water in the river often stank on account of the tannery; the waste contaminated the meadows, the peasants' cattle suffered from anthrax, and the factory was ordered closed. It was considered closed, but went on working secretly, with the knowledge of the district police officer and the district doctor, to each of whom the owner paid ten roubles a month. (Volokhonsky 383-84)

От кожевенной фабрики вода в речке часто становилась вонючей; отбросы заражали луг, крестьянский скот страдал от сибирской язвы, и фабрику приказано было закрыть. Она считалась закрытой, но работала тайно с ведома станового пристава и уездного врача, которым владелец платил по десяти рублей в месяц.

Bill is correct in acknowledging the factory's deleterious effect on natural landscape and the people living in it; however, he fails to adequately emphasize the human element that is ultimately responsible for the factory's harmful practices. Here, we can see that the additional lines acknowledging the continued operation of the factory in violation of the law personalizes the situation in such a way as to turn the attention away from the factory itself and highlight the human element of wrongdoing in this specific situation. Furthermore, the narrator's explanation for why the factory was allowed to continue operating in direct contravention of the law is lengthier than the initial listing of the factory's harmful effects. The additional lines underscore the role of human greed and obstinacy as catalysts in ruining the natural landscape and causing the townspeople's plight.

The tannery and its illegal operation in the town of Ukleyevo is an example of what critic Vladimir Kataev would call the "individualization of a general idea" in Chekhov's works. According to Kataev, one of Chekhov's strengths lay in his ability to incorporate general ideas into his stories so as to show their inapplicability to specific individualized circumstances. According to Kataev, "[t]o individualize is to see in each separate case a unique phenomenon to which generalizations do not apply" (102) and "individual worlds ... always require their own unique

resolution[s]" (109). Kataev goes on to say that Chekhov succeeds in revealing the "absurdity" of generalizations by applying them to specific fact patterns.¹²

Arguably, this insightful point is relevant to the narrator's description of Ukleyevo. Here, the facts present an individualized set of circumstances concerning the continued operation of the tannery in opposition to the law. We can assume that readers, especially Chekhov's contemporaries, would be aware of generalized notion that factories are an unhealthy place that inherently prone to polluting.¹³ Upon first glance, the tannery in Ukleyevo appears to support this general notion, because readers are told it pollutes the local river, poisons the local cattle, and devastates the local scenery. However, the additional "individualized" facts concerning the local bureaucracy and factory owner's corruption expose that additional wrinkle in the analysis. Perhaps this fact pattern better illustrates the pitfalls of human corruption and failure of the law than any problem intrinsic to factories.

Bill's willingness to cast factories as harbingers of ecological devastation, without a more detailed analysis, is typical among critics (Gassner 175).¹⁴ More

¹²See Kataev 240-241, which includes an excellent discussion of the principle as applied in the case of "A Doctor's Visit."

¹³While modern day readers can also readily identify with the general notion that factories are polluters, the point is especially relevant to Chekhov's contemporaries. See "A Medical Case" (Volkhonsky 321-322), where there is a poignant discussion of the generally pessimistic attitude taken in literature towards the unhealthy nature of factories; Also the sheer number of landscapes tainted by industrial pollution in Chekhov's own fiction highlights this general proposition.

¹⁴Most critics mention Chekhov's factory references only in so far as they support the overall perception of pessimism present in Chekhov's works (See Bill 161-162, Lindheim 62-63, Polotskaya 20-12, Winner 123-137).

importantly, it misses a valuable opportunity for exploring the numerous mitigating factors offered by Chekhov's fiction. The focus on ecological destruction is important, but it merely reveals one of the many possibilities raised by technological modernity. Moreover, it fails to take into account the obvious usefulness of factories as tools in a changing world. In order to more accurately flesh out the complex nature of factories in Chekhov, we will begin by more closely examining the factory itself, thus exposing an entity with a genuine useful and logical purpose. This evinces a purpose that is greater than simply acting as a symbol of technological destruction.

Most technological innovations have a demonstrable purpose. The factory in Chekhov's world is a tool for the production of "things." We see tanneries for leather production ("In the Ravine"), industrial kilns for brick production ("Gooseberries" and "In the Ravine"), cotton mills for textile production ("In the Ravine" and "A Doctor's Visit"), bone-burning plants for charcoal ("Gooseberries"), ceramic factories producing tile for ovens ("The Murder"), and foundries for metal production ("Fish Love" and "A Woman's Kingdom"). Chekhov's decision to inform readers as to each factory's purpose is relevant, because it shows an unwillingness on his part to divorce the tool (factory) from its useful application (products). Arguably, this additional information can be perceived as suggesting that factories are not necessarily unproductive entities causing natural destruction. Instead, readers are informed of their purpose as makers of beneficial everyday goods.

The valuable nature of factories is specifically mentioned by at least one important environmentally conscious character in *Uncle Vanya* («Дядя Ваня»)

(1897). Dr. Astrov, the family's physician, is highly conscious of continued deforestation in rural Russia and its purported effects on the diminishing numbers of wildlife; he gives testament to the notion that a factory can be a useful thing if its establishment is concomitant with the health and prosperity of the Russian people.

Yes, I'd understand that, if these depleted forests were replaced by paved highways, railroads, if there were factories, mill, schools, - if the lower classes had become healthier, more prosperous, more intelligent... (Senelick 851)

Да, я понимаю, если бы на месте этих истребленных лесов пролегли шоссе, железные дороги, если бы тут близаводы, фабрики, школы - народ стал бы здоровее, богаче, умнее

Here, we have an instance in which factories and modernization are cast in a hopeful light through a character dedicated to environmental conservation.¹⁵ This noteworthy¹⁶ monologue acknowledges the prospect that good environmental stewardship and technological modernization are not mutually exclusive. The prior depictions of natural landscapes ruined by industrial pollution are not necessarily the only effects of industrial modernization. As this passage shows, factories can be a helpful tool for mankind in alleviating man's material situation and elevating his mental faculties.

Factory products are not always viewed as useful items helping to alleviate the material woes and wants of man. One of the more notable instances in which a

¹⁵See Rayfield 205-207, who discusses the importance of Dr. Astrov's "conservation speech" as strengthening the original environmental motifs featured in *The Wood Demon*.

¹⁶See Baehr 100, who rightly points out that this monologue is helpful for understanding Chekhov's "general concept of progress."

product comes under attack occurs in "A Doctor's Visit." The Lialikov's product "calico" is denounced by the protagonist Korolev as "poor quality calico" no fewer than three times in the span of one paragraph:

Fifteen hundred, two thousand factory hands work without rest, in unhealthy conditions, producing poor-quality calico, starving and only occasionally sobering up from this nightmare... and only the two or three so-called owners enjoy the profits, though they don't work at all and scorn poor-quality calico... And so it turns out that all five of these buildings work, and poor-quality calico is sold... so that Christina Dmitrievna can eat sterlet and drink Madeira. (Volokhonsky 326-27)

Тысячи полторы-две фабричных работают без отдыха, в нездоровой обстановке, делая плохой ситец, живут впроголодь и только изредка в кабаке отрезвляются от этого кошмара;... и только двое-трое, так называемые хозяева, пользуются выгодами, хотя совсем не работают и презирают плохой ситец. ... И выходит так, значит, что работают все эти пять корпусов и на восточных рынках продается плохой ситец для того только, чтобы Христина Дмитриевна могла кушать стерлядь и пить мадеру».

Upon first glance, these statements by Korolev paint a damning impression of the factory complex as a place where workers live a wretched existence, while producing a cheap product whose profits benefit only a very select few. While there undoubtedly exists truth in these observations, readers should not allow this seemingly conclusive condemnation of the factory complex to become the final judgment of the character or author.

Literary scholar Alexander Chudakov has written extensively about the dangers of taking statements made by Chekhov's literary characters at face value, and assuming that the uttered words are the character's "express and final truth" (200-201). More importantly, readers should turn their attention to what Chudakov calls the "incidental conditions" under which the statement was made, because "Chekhov considers it important not only to express one or another opinion, but to show the conditional nature of each opinion and its dependence upon the surroundings" (id). Arguably, Chudakov's observations are essential in interpreting Korolev's damning description of the Lialikov factory. Let us look at the "incidental" conditions under which Korolev uttered his statements. We learn within the first few paragraphs of the story that he had "never been interested in factories or visited them," but had "read about factories" and talked with some factory owners (Volokhonsky 321). This limited knowledge and lack of first hand experience with factories does not stop Korolev from concluding that inside every factory was "impenetrable ignorance and obtuse egoism of the owners [and] tedious unhealthy labor of the workers" (id at 322). This prejudged stereotype of the factory atmosphere is further intensified by Mrs. Lialikov's request that he stay the night looking after her sick daughter, Liza. This request irritates Korolev who must now delay his return trip to Moscow. This unexpected turn of events coupled with an already less than pleasant impression of the governess and disdain for the Liliakovs' poor-quality calico puts Korolev in a cantankerous mood. Keeping these "incidental conditions" in mind, we will now examine Korolev's subsequent characterization of the factory as a satanic beast:

[A]nd he kept glancing back at the two windows gleaming with fire. It seemed to him that the devil himself was gazing at him through those crimson eyes, the unknown power that created the relations between strong and weak. (Volokhonsky 327)

[И] оглядывался на два окна, в которых светился огонь. Ему казалось, что этими багровыми глазами смотрел на него сам дьявол, та неведомая сила, которая создала отношения между сильными и слабыми..

Though this characterization is rife with diabolical imagery it should not be viewed as a final pronouncement of factories as inherently evil. Instead, readers should question the finality of this statement in light of "incidental conditions" affecting Korolev at the time of reflection. Here, perhaps Korolev was chiefly irritated by the delay of his return trip to Moscow, the Lialikovs' governess, and his own cynical view of factory life.¹⁷ These negative incidental conditions offer readers good reason to be skeptical concerning the finality of Korolev's menacing impressions. In other words, readers should not assume that Korolev's highly critical observations concerning the Lialikovs' factory is the final truth on the matter. As we will see, these highly negative impressions are conditional and subject to the changing incidental conditions affecting the protagonist.

The negative incidental conditions helping evoke Korolev's demonic imagery of the Lialikov factory give way to an optimistic take on life and the future by the story's end. It is the personal contact and positive conversation between him and

¹⁷Korolev's cynicism is largely attributable to the literature he has read on factories and their owners. Also, he suffers from a general sense of hopelessness, because he considers the plight of workers an "incurable disease" (Volokhonsky 326).

Liza which completely changes his cynical and pessimistic outlook on the future of man, and has transformative power over the way he interprets the current world around him. The world around Korolev, initially described as a factory town covered in "gray" dust with "pathetic" gardens and homes, is transformed by the story's end into a place "where the larks [are] singing and the church bells ringing" (Volokhonsky 331). Even the factory windows that Korolev initially perceived as the eyes of the devil now shine "merrily" (id). The entire factory scene has transformed from a gray pathetic town with a factory resembling a devilish beast into something cheerful and light. The final landscape is described as follows:

One could hear the larks singing, the church bells ringing. The windows of the factory shone merrily, and, driving through the yard and then on the way to the station, Korolev no longer remembered the workers, or the pile-dwellings, or the devil, but thought about the time, perhaps close at hand, when life would be as bright and joyful as this quiet Sunday morning... (331)

Было слышно, как пели жаворонки, как звонили в церкви. Окна в фабричных корпусах весело сияли, и, проезжая через двор и потом по дороге к станции, Королев уже не помнил ни о рабочих, ни о свайных постройках, ни о дьяволе, а думал о том времени, быть может, уже близком, когда жизнь будет такую же светлую и радостной, как это тихое, воскресное утро...

This change in mood and outlook on the present and future taking place in Korolev is also indicative of what Vladimir Kataev calls the "individualization" of a "general idea" (240-241). Here, the preconceived notions Korolev garnered from books and newspapers about factories and their owners are put to the test when he is made to

visit the Lialikov factory. He meets and interacts with real people, and even comes to reach a level of mutual understanding with the factory owner's daughter that is not only rare in Chekhov, but completely unexpected by Korolev (Kataev 240-241). Suddenly, the general idea of "impenetrable ignorance and obtuse egoism [intrinsic to factory] owners" gives way to Korolev's being very "glad" at having met a "nice" and "interesting" person like Liza (Volokhonsky 330). Korolev's friendship with Liza produces a positive change from his former gloomy outlook; sadness, poverty, and darkness give way to merriment, light, and hope.

The use of diabolic imagery to describe a factory is even more poignant in *A Woman's Kingdom*, where the young factory heiress Anna Akimovna finds herself trapped in between the low class background of her youth and the new class of industrial bourgeois with which she feels compelled to assimilate. On one hand, young Anna feels duty bound to her new position as a wealthy benefactress of the newly established industrial tycoon class, and on the other hand she feels as if she belongs to the very working class over which she now presides. The friction between her past and present develops within Anna a sense of societal isolation and emotional struggle for self identity. These are the general factors weighing on her soul when readers first see her factory complex through her eyes

The high ceilings with iron girders; the multitude of huge, rapidly turning wheels, connecting straps and levers; the shrill hissing; the clank of steel; the rattle of the trolleys; the harsh puffing of steam; the faces -- pale, crimson, or black with coal-dust; the shirts soaked with sweat; the gleam of steel, of copper, and of fire; the

smell of oil and coal; and the draught, at times very hot and at times very cold -- gave her an impression of hell.

Высокие потолки с железными балками, множество громадных, быстро вращающихся колес, приводных ремней и рычагов, пронзительное шипение, визг стали, дребезжание вагонеток, жесткое дыхание пара, бледные или багровые или черные от угольной пыли лица, мокрые от пота рубахи, блеск стали, меди и огня, запах масла и угля, и ветер, ... произвели на нее впечатление ада.

This frightening image of the factory with its "hissing of steam, clanking of steel, and coal dust" creates a devilish picture in the minds of readers. Readers, however, must remember that this extremely dark and frightening image of the factory is reminiscent of Korolev's first devilish impressions of the Lialikovs' factory complex which ultimately gave way to "singing larks" and "merry factory windows." Readers must, therefore, ask themselves why Anna Akimovna views her own factory in such a negative light. What are the incidental conditions causing Anna Akimovna to impute malevolent qualities onto the factory's lifeless machinery? In short, she is a young woman caught between different worlds. She was born into a working class family, who become upwardly mobile because of her uncle's good fortunes in business. Though she has been educated by a governess and lives a life of luxury, she still feels disconnected from the emerging industrial class of which she is a member. Though she is surrounded by other people for the duration of the story, she feels a constant sense of loneliness "burdened" by her position as heiress to her uncle's fortune. She is a young woman in need of "real human" contact. We hear

this cry for meaningful human contact during her visit to Tchalikov. His insistence on protocol and disingenuous platitudes illustrates the constant flow of banalities Anna must listen to in her life, on account of her social position. Anna's entreaty that Tchalikov "speak [to her] as a human being" affirms Anna's personal desire for meaningful human contact without the need for insincere "social protocol." This is an unpleasant and emotionally detrimental position artificially created by class divisions. The melancholy resulting from Anna's difficult social position and sense of isolation can be classified as the "incidental" conditions heavily affecting her negative outlook on the factory at the story's beginning.

Anna's sense of isolation becomes further apparent on Christmas day when her subordinates pay their respects to her. The constant parade of Christmas well wishers evokes her comment that there was something "cruel" in these "customs" where social inferiors must present themselves to the master, despite the snow and the cold. Though she is the factory's heiress, she feels powerless in the face of the industrial social construct surrounding the factory, and she begins to think of it as her own prison:

"If I could fall in love," she thought, stretching; the very thought of this sent a rush of warmth to her heart. "And if I could escape from the factory..." she mused, imagining how the weight of those factory buildings, barracks, and schools would roll off her conscience, roll off her mind....

«Вот влюбиться бы, — думала она, потягиваясь, и от одной этой мысли у нее около сердца становилось тепло. — И от завода избавиться бы...» — мечтала

она, воображая, как с ее совести сваливаются все эти тяжелые корпуса,
бараки, школа...

Not unlike Korolev, who muses that everyone was a prisoner of the factory, Anna has come to regard the factory as its own form of penal servitude. The factory itself, however, is not her cage, but the social classes that have developed around it. This social class structure denies her a sense of identity, meaningful human contact, and the man she is attracted to. She wants to love a workman, Pimenov, but her new class status forbids such a marital match. She wants to give away 1500 rubles to a family in need, but the embarrassment of her position and the annoyance of her subordinates' platitudes prevent her natural act of giving charity to Tchalikov. In many ways, readers come to sense that Anna is as much a victim of this new social construct as are the workmen who live in squalor under her. It is a vicious cycle of class division that oppresses the bottom and top of society. These divisions prevent humans from different levels of society from interacting in any meaningful manner. It is this corrupting influence exerted by the new industrial class divisions which causes Anna's initial sense of repulsion at seeing her own factories. When one takes the entire story into account it is easy to see the "incidental" conditions that give rise to Anna's decidedly negative outlook on the factories. In simple terms, she is transferring her own negative experiences and emotions onto an inanimate tool, the factory. If Anna is a prisoner, then it is not the tangible factory walls that confine her, but the intangible social forces that have sprung up around this useful object.

The preceding paragraphs show that the satanic imagery inspired by the Liliakovs' calico factory and Anna Akimovna's foundry can be partially explained by

negative "incidental conditions" affecting the protagonist as they offer these descriptions. This analysis is not to say that the negative symbolic imagery present should be disregarded. The social ills and negative environmental consequences that factories give rise to cannot be ignored. However, readers should consider the fact that these negative depictions are not a final judgment on factories in the literary works of Chekhov. They are merely contributing to an ongoing discussion of technological modernization and its consequences. Dr. Astrov hints at the fact that factories are tools and can have a positive and productive reason for existing. Unfortunately, that notion is often forgotten because of real life "individualized" problems or situations that are not easily redressed by society's "general ideas."

Finally, there exists at least one instance in which a workman's factory experience is "fondly" characterized, in contrast to the deplorable conditions witnessed by Korolev and Anna Akimovna. The tile factory in "The Murder" evokes nostalgic memories for the protagonist Matvey. The tile factory conjures up happy memories for Matvey. Readers can garner from the text that while living at the factory he ate well, was able to save up a sizable sum of money, and was even able to participate in a factory choir. These memories create the impression of an almost ideal factory life, except for the fact that Matvey received a devastating injury while lifting a heavy crate at the factory, which effectively ended his career. Despite this work related injury, Matvey's recollections of his former life leave him "continually sighing and pining for his tile factory." At one point, he even stares at the tiles on the Dutch oven so as to remind himself of the factory at which he once lived and worked. Unfortunately for Matvey, the pleasure induced by recollections of factory

life become a source of melancholy and the object of cruel sarcasm by his self-righteous sister Aglaia, who chides him for what she considers a present and former life of overindulgence.

"Sister," Matvey asked, "let me have a little oil!"

"Who eats oil on a day like this?" asked Aglaia.

"I am not a monk, sister, but a layman. And in my weak health I may take not only oil but milk"

"Yes, at the factory you may have anything."

"Aglaia took a bottle of Lenten Oil from the shelf and banged it angrily down before Matvey, with a malignant smile evidently pleased that he was such a sinner.

Сестрица, — попросил Матвей, — позвольте мне маслица!

Кто же в такой день масло ест? — спросила Аглая.

Я, сестрица, не монах, а мирянин. А по слабости здоровья мне не то что масло, даже молоко можно.

Да, у вас на заводе всё можно.

Аглая достала с полки бутылку с постным маслом и поставила ее перед

Матвеем, сердито стукнув, с злорадной улыбкой, очевидно, довольная, что он такой грешник.

This characterization of the tile factory as a place of "plenty" and a source happiness for Matvey constitutes a very different view of factory life than that which "A Doctor's Visit" and "A Woman's Kingdom" depicts. Also, it is worth mentioning that Matvey's recollections are those of an actual factory worker as opposed to the viewpoint of Korolev or Anna Akimovna; both of whom represent groups of people

in a privileged position looking down on the factory worker's condition. Matvey, however, is an individual who lived and labored in a factory complex, and his outlook on the factory community is genuinely positive. Arguably, the happy environment fostered at the tile factory evinces a new potentiality in Chekhov's fiction for life of an ordinary factory worker. Though Matvey's recollections are likely tainted by the sweet nostalgia he feels for his former life, it does add a new wrinkle to our understanding of factories. Furthermore, it helps dispel the notion that the factory floor and surrounding community is always a place of filth, poverty, and depressed workers.

CHAPTER III

Steamships: Fierce Iron Monsters or Objects of Beauty?

Unlike factories, steamships rarely if ever take center stage in Chekhov's works, except for the notable exception of "Gusev" (1890). The lack of material emphasizing the presence of these nineteenth century technological marvels makes the particular instances in which they are mentioned all the more memorable and important. These depictions are valuable because they help readers to more clearly define and ascertain the significance of machines in Chekhov's fiction.

The short story "Gusev" is the most natural starting point for this discussion, because its depiction of a steamship is both extensive and revealing of the treatment machines receive in Chekhov's fiction. The setting and events from "Gusev" are largely inspired by Chekhov's visit to the island of Sakhalin in 1890. This unexpected and physically rigorous journey to the prison colony on Sakhalin afforded the impressionable Chekhov a unique opportunity to study the general problem of prison colonies in an up-close and scientific manner.¹⁸ The experiences and impressions of the journey came at a "critical juncture in the development of his literary style," allowing Chekhov to "re-establish his priorities" and delve into humanitarian issues (Meister 167-168). "Gusev," a short work dealing with the

¹⁸See Clayman 24-25. Chekhov: A Biography. In Toby Clayman (Ed.) *A Chekhov Companion*; & Conrad 167-171, Chekhov as Social Observer: The Island of Sakhalin.

experiences of several ex-soldiers returning on a steamship from Russia's far flung eastern front, has been interpreted as showcasing the insignificance of man in a brutal and hostile world (Lindheim 57). This point is well illustrated by a moving and dramatic description of the ocean given by the narrator as the terminally ill Gusev stands at the bow of the ship gazing out at the relentless "high waves" and bottomless depths before him:

[B]elow is darkness and disorder. The high waves roar for no known reason. Each wave, whichever you look at, tries to rise higher and higher than all, and pushes and drives out the last; and noisily sweeping towards it, its white mane gleaming, comes a third just as fierce and hideous... The sea has no sense or pity. (Voloikhonsky 119)

[В]низу же — темнота и беспорядок. Неизвестно для чего, шумят высокие волны. На какую волну ни посмотришь, всякая старается подняться выше всех, и давит, и гонит другую; на нее с шумом, отсвечивая своей белой гривой, налетает третья, такая же свирепая и безобразная... У моря нет ни смысла, ни жалости.

The immense power of the "roaring" waves" that sweep "relentlessly" one after another present a stark contrast to the frail Gusev, who stands on deck leaning on a fellow soldier for support. At this moment, his situation appears completely helpless and at the mercy of not only the kindly soldier supporting him but the "fierce" natural world around him. This is a natural world that acts without "sense" or "pity" and could seemingly swallow up the feeble Gusev in an instant. The narrator's description is imbued with a sense of "helplessness" and leads one to wonder if the description not only captures the "tone and spirit" of Gusev's position, but is in fact a

downright reflection of his state of mind. This scene's overall sense of helplessness is further compounded by the narrator's subsequent description of the steamship upon which Gusev is travelling. Let us look again at this description, from which I have quoted earlier in this thesis.

If the ship were smaller and not made of thick iron, the wave would break it up without mercy and devour all the people, saints and sinners alike. The ship, too, has a senseless and cruel expression... it cares about nothing, and if the ocean had its own people, this monster would also crush them, saints and sinners alike.

(Voloikhonsky 119)

Будь пароход поменьше и сделан не из толстого железа, волны разбили бы его без всякого сожаления и сожрали бы всех людей, не разбирая святых и грешных. У парохода тоже бессмысленное и жестокое выражение... ему всё нипочем, и если бы у океана были свои люди, то оно, чудовище, давило бы их, не разбирая тоже святых и грешных.

This frightening description of the "beaked monster" upon which Gusev and his fellow comrades entrust their fate endows the steamship with the same cruel, uncaring, and fierce characteristics seen in the ocean. This comparison appears to bestow the steamship with a savage brutality, and calls into question the nature of man's relationship to his own creations. One could interpret this passage as advancing the notion that Gusev and his fellow man must not only contend with the fierce ocean that threatens to crush them at any moment, but are also insignificant in comparison to the monstrous iron beast upon which they are travelling.

According to Lindheim, these descriptions of nature and the steamship "expose the

worst features of the world..., the storm-tossed realm of nature and the "violence of the modern technological order" (57). This interpretation I would contend is only partially correct, because these descriptions of the ocean and steamship as "fierce," "senseless," "beasts" are, arguably, the result of the narrator assuming the "tone and spirit" of the protagonist. They are observations of the surrounding world that capture and manifest the melancholy mood of a weak and dying man as he stands on the deck of a ship far from his homeland. This man's sense of helplessness in the face of impending death is given a voice by the narrator, but to assume that this description is the final conclusive truth as to man's relationship to nature and machines would be misleading and misses the subtle complexities of Chekhov's works.

As Chudakov would write, readers should be careful in accepting conclusive assertions by characters without taking all the incidental conditions surrounding those observations into account. This prudent truth-seeking measure of literary interpretation appears applicable to the narrator in Gusev as well. As discussed above, the narrator's portrayal of nature and machine appear to be heavily influenced by, if not a downright representation of Gusev's state of mind, as he stands on the bow of the steamship. In the short time preceding these descriptions, Gusev had been informed that his fellow patient Pavel Ivanyich had passed away and that he too, Gusev, would never see his homeland again. As if these reminders of his impending mortality were not enough, the little horse on deck "bares its teeth, and tries to bite [Gusev's] sleeve while on deck causing Gusev to curse the little horse" (Volokhonsky 119). Though this detail may appear at first superfluous, it is

an excellent example of the sort of vivid details with which Chekhov imbues his works. Here, this example further evidences the overall helplessness that Gusev must feel when he cannot even successfully stroke a "little horse" without it trying to bite him. This example and the preceding reminders of his mortality are the vital "incidental conditions" that one must take into account when assessing the validity of a character's conclusive assertions, or in this case the narrator's observations.

To further reinforce the temporal nature of these observations and their reliance on the Gusev's mindset at a particular time we only need look at the subsequent chapter's description of the sunset. The "fierce" and brutal ocean is transformed into tender, joyful, and passionate colors:

And up above just then, on the side where the sun goes down, clouds are massing; one cloud resembles a triumphal arch, another a lion, a third a pair of scissors... the sky turns a soft lilac. Seeing this magnificent, enchanting sky, the ocean frowns at first, but soon itself takes on such tender, joyful, passionate, colors as human tongue can hardly name. (Volkhonsky 121)

А наверху в это время, в той стороне, где заходит солнце, скучиваются облака; одно облако похоже на триумфальную арку, другое на льва, третье на ножницы... Небо становится нежно-сиреневым. Глядя на это великолепное, очаровательное небо, океан сначала хмурится, но скоро сам приобретает цвета ласковые, радостные, страстные, какие на человеческом языке и назвать трудно.

Such a triumphant and beautiful ending with tender, joyful, and passionate colors stands in stark contrast to the monstrous and brutal images displayed for readers in

the prior section as Gusev stood on the bow of the ship. This peaceful display of nature runs concomitant with the peace Gusev experiences upon his passing from this life. Generally, critics are divided as to whose thoughts and impressions are voiced in the final divine seascape (Lapushin 151).¹⁹ One group contends that the seascape represents a distinct shift from Gusev's point of view to that of an omniscient narrator acting as a proxy for the author's voice. Another group argues that Gusev's presence is felt in the final depiction following his own death. On one hand, the death of Gusev would seemingly preclude his thoughts and feelings from being involved with the story's final natural depiction of the sky and its harmonious effect on the sea.²⁰ This imagery has a harmonious affect and its description stands in stark contrast to the "fierce" and savage descriptions of nature and machine offered by the narrator prior to Gusev's death. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that on a poetic level Gusev's continued presence in the final dramatic landscape has a metaphorical meaning. The "peaceful" sky's harmonization with the "fierce" ocean displays a potentiality for good and evil found in all men. In like fashion, Gusev's "tender" and at times compassionate nature must be rationalized with his "blunt obedience" and "aggressive" nature (158). Thus, a parallel between man and nature is drawn illustrating a potentiality for both "tender" sensitivity and "senseless" destruction.

Ultimately, whether it be the author's voice or a continuation of Gusev's presence following his death, the overall significance for machines of the passage

¹⁹Here, the use of the word "divine" has been ascribed by Bunin. See Lapushin 150-151.

²⁰For a detailed analysis for this final seascape see Lapushin 150-153.

remains much the same. The transformative powers embodied in the natural world and mankind, highlight a potentiality that exists for both the animate and inanimate in Chekhov. Thus, cannot a similar potentiality exist for machines? In the final "divine" description of the ocean and sky, readers are not given a simultaneous description involving the steamship. Despite the absence of such a description echoing this "tender" and "joyful" natural imagery, we can hazard a guess that the prior depiction of the steamship as a "beaked monster" would have transformed into something far less sinister had there been a description of a steamship attendant with this final imagery of nature.

This reading of "Gusev" takes a holistic approach in interpreting the narrator's depiction of the steamship and nature. Also, it is interesting to note that the inclusion of cloud interpretations in this final passage may be a reminder that our perception of our environment is very much a product of our current mindset. Here, we see a triumphal arch, a lion, and a curious pair of scissors where we may earlier have seen all manner of devilish beasts and monsters. By following Chudakov's example and examining the context in which statements are made, even depictions by the narrator, readers can see that what Lindheim called "technological violence" is more complex than is initially apparent. Perhaps it would be fair to say that there was a particular moment in "Gusev" when the steamship was a harbinger of technological violence, and there may be some truth in this statement, but it is does not reveal the full potentiality of machines in Chekhov's fiction.

"Gusev" is a rare instance in Chekhov's works where a steamship receives such a prominent and extensive portrayal, but other passages exists in which

steamships do appear as a useful entity bound up in the beauty of nature. Similar to factories, in that they almost always appear with a corresponding mention of their intrinsic purpose (tannery, brick factory, foundry, tile factory, calico producer etc.), the steamship often appears in connection with its primary function, transportation. Near the end of *The Steppe* (1888), the young protagonist Yegorushka, upon nearing the completion of his journey, is privy to an exhilarating view of a broad river, a steam engine, and a steamship.

The wagons were standing on a big bridge across a broad river. There was black smoke below over the river, and through it could be seen a steamer with a barge in tow. Ahead of them, beyond the river, was a huge mountain dotted with houses and churches; at the foot of the mountain an engine was being shunted along beside some goods trucks.

Обоз стоял на большом мосту, тянувшемся через широкую реку. Внизу над рекой темнел дым, а сквозь него виден был пароход, тащивший на буксире баржу. Впереди за рекой пестрела громадная гора, усеянная домами и церквами; у подножия горы около товарных вагонов бегал локомотив...

Nature, machine, and man have come together to paint an epic landscape for the reader. The steamship is given a practical purpose of barge towing, and in general machines enhance the overall image the landscape for young Yegorushka. We are told that he had never before seen such sights as a "broad river, steamship, and locomotive" but this fact only heightens the sense of wonder for the reader as they behold this exciting view through the eyes of a child seeing it for the first time. In true Chekhovian fashion, readers are quickly reminded of the physical and temporal

reality of such moments, because Yegorushka's initial reaction is not one of curiosity and wonder, but one of nausea. After he recovers from his sickness, however, his first thoughts quickly return to that steamship, train, and wide river.

He remembered the steamer, the railway engine, and the broad river, which he had dimly seen the day before, and now he made haste to dress, to run to the quay and have a look at them.

Он вспомнил пароход, локомотив и широкую реку, которые смутно видел вчера, и теперь спешил поскорее одеться, чтобы побежать на пристань и поглядеть на них.

These two descriptions of a steamship, train, and wide river create a blending effect of nature and machinery. This effect denotes harmony between both nature and machine. This is an image of nature and machine that carries with it the simplicity of a child's mind. Ultimately, it is a child's ability to appreciate the simplicity of how man, machine, and nature can fit together without the taint of cynicism, melancholy, or other adverse conditions that could spoil the view.

Finally, this melding of beauty and usefulness is best illustrated by a seaside depiction found in "Lady with the Little Dog" («Дама с собачкой») (1899). The story's protagonist, Gurov, while sitting by the seashore with Anna Sergeevna, his mistress, is moved by her beauty to surmise that everything is beautiful in the world, even the inconsequential glance of a watchman.

Gurov, reflected that, essentially, if you thought of it, everything was beautiful in this world, everything except for what we ourselves think and do when we forget the higher goals of being and our human dignity.

Some man came up- it must have been a watchman - looked at them, and went away. And this detail seemed such a mysterious thing, and also beautiful. The steamer from Feodosia could be seen approaching in the glow of the early dawn, its lights out. (Volokhonsky 367)

Гуров думал о том, как, в сущности, если вдуматься, всё прекрасно на этом свете, всё, кроме того, что мы сами мыслим и делаем, когда забываем о высших целях бытия, о своем человеческом достоинстве.

Подошел какой-то человек — должно быть, сторож, — посмотрел на них и ушел. И эта подробность показалась такой таинственной и тоже красивой. Видно было, как пришел пароход из Феодосии, освещенный утренней зарей, уже без огней.

Once again, we see a blending of the natural world and machinery. The narrator captures the "tone and spirit" of Gurov's ecstasy as he sits next to the object of his affections. His joy and lofty state of mind imbues the mundane "appearance" of a steamship and the "glance" of a watchman with a sense of "beauty" and "mystery." Though the watchman's glance is specifically mentioned as being that "beautiful" and "mysterious" event, readers can infer that this lofty sensation lingers in the following line as the approaching steamship is described. This machine, the steamship, silhouetted by the "glow" of the early morning sun. The ship's own artificial lights are extinguished, but the sun's ray illuminate the ship, creating a melding effect that blends the ship into the natural background and making it a part of the "beautiful" existence that Gurov imagines. As an object of beauty the steamship speaks to the harmony created by machine and nature when man's heart

is in the right place. While these lofty images are largely dependent upon the protagonist's mindset at a particular moment in time, they do shed light on the possibility of harmony between man, nature, and machine outside of the assumption of a character's tone and spirit at any given time. Though the steamships description from "Lady with a Dog" and *The Steppe* are generally positive and artistically beautiful in that they paint dynamic and handsome machines at work and in harmony with nature for readers, one must remember that they reveal only part of the truth hinted at in Chekhov's fiction. There's a potentiality here for a harmonious blending with nature, but there also exists the possibility of "fierce" and "senseless" destruction as these "beak nosed" monsters plow through the world's oceans. They illuminate a potential that parallels the individual human experience of lofty feelings and senseless violence.

CHAPTER IV

Trains: Positive Potentiality Arrives at the Station of Sober Reality

The representation and symbolic meaning of trains will complete my study of how machines are depicted in Chekhov. Railroads are an indispensable part of Chekhov's literary world. They can serve as the catalyst for the interaction of characters from varied backgrounds and social strata, they can take on frightening characteristics manifesting a work's tone and mood, and in some cases act as symbolic references for the arrival of modernity.

First, we shall begin by revisiting the monstrous depictions highlighted in the first chapter. These overtly sinister descriptions featuring "eyes of fire" ("Country Cottage"), "crimson" furnaces ("Cold Blood"), and funnels "flinging puffs of crimson fire" ("The Murder") appear to endow the locomotives with some evil purpose or intent. A closer reading of the text and a deeper understanding of Chekhov's narrative technique can, however, partially dispel the negative implications that these descriptions confer upon machines. Chudakov points out that an important and innovative feature of Chekhov's style was his ability to join descriptions and the narrative into one syntactic whole. Kataev further illustrates this point:

He has attained great skill in merging the two elements of fiction - the descriptive and the narrative - into one common mass. Before Chekhov, excluding Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, narrative and description almost always alternated without coalescing even in the most subtle master e.g., Turgenev. Description and narration proceeded each in its turn, one after the other... In this striking coalescence of description and narrative we find one of Chekhov's innovations. (qtd. in Chudakov 99)

Hence, descriptions are often carefully woven into the overall narrative and would therefore reflect the tone and spirit of the narrative in their presentation. This important observation concerning Chekhov's narrative technique provides the necessary insight for properly understanding and interpreting these frightening depictions.

The humorous short story "The Country Cottage" opens in a small country railroad station, where a young couple seemingly very much in love awaits the arrival of an incoming train. His arm is "round her waist, [and] her head was almost on his shoulder" as they saunter around the railway platform enveloped by the fragrant smell of lilac and wild cherry. This sweet, loving, and thoughtful moment is interrupted by the presence of an approaching train. The appearance and description of the locomotive strongly contrasts with the blissful aura surrounding the young and happy couple.

Three eyes of fire could be seen in the distance... the dark monster crept noiselessly alongside the platform and came to a standstill.

Вдали показались три огненные глаза... Темное страшилище бесшумно подползло к платформе и остановилось.

The presence of "fiery" eyes endows this "dark monster" with diabolical overtones. The description itself as voiced by the narrator completely disrupts the previous "happy" mood the couple appears to be experiencing. Furthermore, if taken out of context this quote could be used as evidence that like Tolstoy, trains in Chekhov represent a kind of dark force invading the quiet "country" station. This description, however, is a perfect example of what Chudakov points out as the syntactic union of the narrative and descriptive (Chudakov 99). At first glance, this assertion appears strange in this context because this narrator's description appears to contrast heavily with couple's "happy" mood. Readers soon learn, however, that this train is bringing the young husband's relatives for a prolonged visit at the newlyweds' country cottage. The bickering and hateful glance of Sasha at his young wife make it readily apparent that this was not a welcome visit by relatives to the young couple. The narrator's sinister description of the train is a manifestation of the irritation and disgust Sasha felt in watching the approaching train carrying his unwelcome relatives.

Also, this short piece contains a fascinating observation by the young wife, Varya, that characterizes trains as harbingers of civilization and humanity.

"How beautiful it is, Sasha, how beautiful!" murmured the young wife. "It all seems like a dream. See, how sweet and inviting that little copse looks! How nice those solid, silent telegraph posts are! They add a special note to the landscape, suggesting humanity, civilization in the distance. . . . Don't you think it's lovely when the wind brings the rushing sound of a train?"

Как хорошо, Саша, как хорошо! — говорила жена. — Право, можно подумать, что всё это снится. Ты посмотри, как уютно и ласково глядит этот лесок! Как милы эти солидные, молчаливые телеграфные столбы! Они, Саша, оживляют ландшафт и говорят, что там, где-то, есть люди... цивилизация... А разве тебе не нравится, когда до твоего слуха ветер слабо доносит шум идущего поезда?

In contrast to the aforementioned description of the train by the narrator, this observation by Varya leads readers to believe that the incursion of trains into the countryside is a positive modernizing trend. This talk of civilization and humanity "in the distance" signifies a possible belief of their absence in rural Russia, according to young Varya. The inspiring and positive tone of this observation should be cautiously accepted by the readers, because it may partially be the product of "incidental conditions" acting upon the protagonist at this particular moment in time. At the moment these words are spoken, Varya is a young woman in love with her husband and inspired by the beautiful landscape that surrounds her. In a word, she is caught up in the moment and her musings on civilization, humanity, and technology are arguably, the product of the incidental conditions affecting her. Ultimately, there may be some truth in both of the railroad descriptions offered here. The idea of technology and its benefits is almost as intoxicating and inspiring as the hope for the future experienced by a young woman in love. Unfortunately, the arrival of reality, both for purposes of married life and the actual implementation of technology can have negative and unintended consequences (a more in-depth discussion of railroads acting as harbingers of modernity and civilization will appear later). Finally, it must be mentioned that this visual imagery

produces yet another excellent example of when machine and nature combine to produce a harmonious landscape. This description of the telegraph lines and the "lovely" rush of wind from the approaching train works in tandem with the fragrant "lilacs" and "wild cherries" to produce a sense of harmonious blending between technology and nature. One should note that a similar effect was achieved earlier in "Lady with a Dog" and *The Steppe* where steamships are seamlessly woven into the natural landscape surrounding them.

Having completed our analysis of "Country Cottage" we can now turn to the previously quoted stories "Cold Blood" and "The Murder," where readers are confronted by similar diabolical train depictions. Once again, what Kataev and Chudakov would call the "coalescence of description and narrative" can be used in helping explain these sinister depictions of locomotives.

In "Cold Blood," readers first see the locomotive through the eyes of the old merchant Malahin as he approaches the locomotive in order to find out why the train has stopped. The image of a "red open furnace" and its "motionless" master, the engineer, with his pointed hat silhouetted by a "crimson glow" gives the unmistakable impression that hellish forces are united with this train. One can argue that there are dark forces at work in this story, but the inanimate train is not the central player. Instead, it is being used as a pawn in an intricate bribery scheme that impacts not only its human participants, but also the helpless cattle being transported. In the course of the story, there are no fewer than five distinct episodes in which the merchant Malahin pays bribes to keep the cattle train moving. This deplorable activity that is demanded by all parties involved illustrates the level

of corruption faced by merchants such as Malahin in undertaking even a simple capitalistic endeavor such as transporting cattle to market in late nineteenth century Russia. Even more so than sympathizing with Malahin, readers are tasked with feeling empathetic for the cattle who must endure days without food or water as they are jolted about on the journey. This sphere of corruption resulted in deplorable conditions for the cattle and can be interpreted as explaining the locomotive's diabolical description early in the story. The narrative itself highlights the cruel treatment of animals at the hands of corrupt railway bureaucrats and the train's description reflects this truth. Readers should, therefore, not conclude that the inanimate train is somehow a diabolical beast, but should instead understand that this useful tool is being misused.

To further reinforce the fact that the locomotive itself is not diabolical, but being misused for improper purposes, we can look at one description from "Cold Blood" in which the train is not endowed with dark imagery. Midway through the story, the narrator offers a description of a sidelined locomotive that has been uncoupled from its cars and is apparently experiencing a type of momentary "freedom."

Meanwhile the passenger train has long ago gone off, and an engine runs backwards and forwards on the empty line, apparently without any definite object, but simply enjoying its freedom. The sun has risen and is playing on the snow; bright drops are falling from the station roof and the tops of the vans.

Между тем пассажирский поезд давно уже ушел, и по свободному пути взад и вперед, как кажется, без всякой определенной цели, а просто радуясь своей

свободе, бегают дежурный локомотив. Солнце уже взошло и играет по снегу; с навеса станции и с крыш вагонов падают светлые капли.

This locomotive "running" to and fro on its sidetrack in total "freedom" demonstrates an important point. The machine itself is not an inherently evil contraption, and in the right circumstances can even seem light-hearted when it is not the object of misuse. Furthermore, the description of this "free" locomotive blends harmoniously into the natural description offered in the same paragraph. Here, the rising sun is "playing" on the snow apparently enjoying itself in much the same way as the locomotive. This blending of machine and nature shows that harmony can exist between the two and lays the foundation of thinking that Chekhov's literary attitude towards machines was one of cautious optimism and not solely pessimism.

Lastly, it is important to briefly discuss the depiction of the locomotives in "The Murder." In the general overview, it was shown that there was a short description of two train locomotives "breathing heavily, and flinging puff of crimson fire out of their funnels." This sinister depiction of the train parallels the previous examples cited above, and in like fashion this dark imagery reflects the narrative's tone and spirit. The description occurs as Yakov Ivanich and his daughter Dashutka are returning home after dumping the body of Matvey, Yakov's brother. After having accomplished their vile deed, they are stopped at the train tracks while a goods train breathing "crimson fire" passes by. The horrendous action of having murdered a family member is manifested in the machines physical description. Also worthy of note is the fact that there are two fire breathing locomotives pulling this

train along; a number that mirrors Yakov and Dashutka, who have just pulled along their own wagon of dark goods (the body of Matvey).

After examining the depiction of locomotives as dark, monstrous, beasts we can finally discuss the symbolic implications of the railroad as an instrument of technological and societal modernization. This point has already been mentioned in the context of the "Country Cottage," where trains are seen as sources of "civilization" and "humanity." According to Bakygul Aliev's recent essay exploring Chekhov's pastoral communities, this lofty notion stands at odds with classical European poetry's preference for the pastoral as a kind of safe haven from morally decrepit urban environments (464). Therefore, "going away to the country was seen as a purifying act, since the country was supposedly free of the corrupting pressures found in the cities" and "dwellers could regain their humanity." Also, it contrasts with the earlier highlighted views of Tolstoy, who casts railroads in a highly critical light. While arguing that Chekhov's fictions portrays neither the urban nor pastoral setting as being morally superior to the other, Aliev highlights Chekhov's willingness to part with the classical European notion that the pastoral community is better than the urban. He does so by emphasizing the less than ideal country life described in "The Peasants." Aliev convincingly argues that Chekhov's "pastoral" communities are less than idyllic by offering the following analysis.

The pastoral notion that one finds spiritual liberation in the country far away from the city is undermined in "The Peasants." Petty skirmishes, arguments, beatings, poverty, hunger, and hard physical labor, excessive drinking, and diseases, bring the peasants to the level of utmost crudity and animal-like behavior. (Aliev 465).

This less than ideal description of country life untouched by technology helps to dispel any prior romantic sentiments that readers may have had for the pristine pastoral in Chekhov. Moreover, it invites readers to wonder if Varya from "Country Cottage" was partially correct in asserting that railroads and telegraph lines were not bringing civilization and humanity to the nearly barbaric communities represented in "The Peasants." There are other examples in which direct reference is made to the lack of or distance from a railway station as a contributing cause for a rural region's backwards nature. For example in "Ward No. 6," Dr. Andrei Yefimych muses to himself that:

[S]uch an abomination as Ward No. 6 is only possible 200 miles [versts in the original Russian] from the railroad, in a town where the mayor and all the councilmen are semi-literature bourgeois, who see a doctor as a sort of priest who is to be believed without any criticism, even if he starts pouring molten tin down people's throats; anywhere else the public and the newspapers would long ago have smashed this little Bastille to bits. (Volokhonsky 190)

[Т]акая мерзость, как палата N 6, возможна разве только в двухстах верстах от железной дороги, в городке, где городской голова и все гласные - полуграмотные мещане, видящие во враче жреца, которому нужно верить без всякой критики, хотя бы он вливал в рот расплавленное олово; в другом же месте публика и газеты давно бы уже расхватили в клочья эту маленькую Бастилию.

This striking condemnation of the hospital and the town found by the doctor is largely attributed to the lack of a railroad station with its simultaneous influx of

civilization and humanity. The train is a catalyst by which new people, talent, and ideas can actively transform the "semi-literate" ruling class and temper the "superstitious" townspeople.

The railroad as a catalyst of positive change also resonates in *Three Sisters* («Три сестры») (1900), where the Muscovite Vershinin points out that "only it's odd, the train station is over thirteen miles away... and nobody knows why that is."²¹ We could surmise that it is the large distance from a railway station that contributes to the town's "dull" demeanor and the overall lethargy of the story's protagonists. This interpretation makes sense, but readers should be urged to pay attention to Vershinin's scenic description of nature.

But here there's such a broad, such a fertile river! A wonderful river! Here there's such a wholesome, bracing Russian climate. A forest, a river... and birch trees here too. Dear, humble birches, I love them more than any other tree. It's a good place to live. Only it's odd, the train station is over thirteen miles away ... And nobody knows why that is. (Senelick 892-893)

А Здесь какая широкая, какая богатая река! Чудесная река! ... Здесь такой здоровый, хороший, славянский климат. Лес, река... и здесь тоже березы. Милые, скромные березы, я люблю их больше всех деревьев. Хорошо здесь жить. Только странно, вокзал железной дороги в двадцати верстах... И никто не знает, почему это так.

²¹Stephen Baehr, in his essay "The Machine in Chekhov's Garden," points out that the distance from a railway contributes to the town's "dull" demeanor and perhaps negatively influences the idyllic lifestyle of the story's protagonists. See e 100, especially footnote #3, which provides a more detailed discussion of the railway reference from *Three Sisters*.

This beautiful depiction of the town's natural landscape contrasts with Vershinin's interjection concerning the long distance to the nearest railroad station, and raises an interesting question as to the relationship between machines and nature.

Perhaps the natural beauty of the town is preserved in its pristine state because of the railway's absence. This is a point that the characters seem to pass over, but raises questions for the careful reader. One could suggest that this is evidence of Chekhov's duality in how machines are presented in his literary world. The absence of a railroad station, arguably, contributes to the characters' lethargy and failure to take initiative, but on the other hand helps preserve the town's natural landscape. At the very least, this interpretation raises questions concerning the positive or negative nature of machines, but does not offer any conclusive answers.

In general, we have seen that the less than idyllic presentation of the rural Russian lifestyle by Chekhov and the negative implications raised by the absence of a local railroad station at least raise the possibility of machines, and more specifically the train, as a useful tool for societal change. Several critics have picked up on that fact that modernity has the possibility of being labeled positive in Chekhov's works, but as Lindheim notes, any change in "material prosperity without concomitant improvements in the nation's intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual life will prove clumsy and empty, a waste of time" (62). Lindheim's observation is strongly evidenced by *Uncle Vanya's* Dr. Astrov who noted that modernization in the form of factories, schools, and highways was a positive change "if the lower classes had become healthier, more prosperous, more intelligent" (Senelick 851). The ability of the train to deliver upon Dr. Astrov's hope for a better tomorrow for

Russia's poor through modernizing trends is more fully explored in *The Cherry Orchard*.

Stephen Baehr's "The Machine in Chekhov's Garden," while focusing almost exclusively on *The Cherry Orchard*, appears to be one of the few literary articles that attempts to grapple with the dual nature of machines in Chekhov. According to Baehr, Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* is a "witness" to the machine's victory over Russia's pastoral past (Baehr 111). The chief technological marvel that symbolizes this invasion of Russia's country landscape is the train. Baehr builds a strong case in arguing that from the moment Lopakhin announces the arrival of Ranevskaya's train a battle ensues between the forces of modernity and the stagnant old nobility resistant to all forms of social and economic change. Ultimately, Baehr says that the new modern forces symbolized by Lopakhin and his capitalistic notions triumph, but this victory does have its drawbacks in the form of a lost pastoral mode of life marked by "love, generosity, kindness, a love of nature and beauty, and an esteem for culture and history" (101). These sentimental notions encapsulate the "general idea" of what Russian society is losing with the destruction of the old nobility; however, readers must also pay attention to the play's equal emphasis on the "individualization" of this destruction by focusing on Madame Ranevskaya and her brother Gaev's sense of personal loss. Ranevskaya's personal loss is felt strongly by readers when upon being told to look truth "straight in the eye" and accept that she has lost her ancestral home she declares:

This is where I was born, after all, this is where my father and my mother lived, my grandfather, I love this house, without the cherry orchard I couldn't make sense of

my life... Remember, my son was drowned here... (weeps.) Show me some pity, dear, kind man. (Senelick 1022)

Ведь я родилась здесь, здесь жили мои отец и мать, мой дед, я люблю этот дом, без вишневого сада я не понимаю своей жизни... Ведь мой сын утонул здесь... *(Плачет.)* Пожалейте меня, хороший, добрый человек.

The inclusion of the poignant fact that Ranevskaya lost her son on this estate has the added effect of eliciting sympathy from readers and reminding everyone that a real person is experiencing the loss of something near and dear to her. The prior sins of her class and personal failure to organize her finances or adapt to a changing world take a backseat to a general sense of empathy created by her words. This serves as a stark reminder that modernity and its concomitant forces of change can have dire consequences for members of all classes.

What about Dr. Astrov's plea for a better tomorrow in which Russia's poor are lifted spiritually, intellectually, and physically by the advent of modern machines? We have seen that the train's whistle is sounding the death knell for Russia's old landed aristocracy, but what of the poor? First, there is the obvious example of Lopakhin. Modernity, or more specifically capitalism, has raised him from the "barefooted barely literate" son of a slave to the position of wealthy merchant and landowner.

If only my father and grandfather could rise up from their graves and see all that's happened, how their Yermolay, beaten, barely literate Yermolay, who used to run around barefoot in the wintertime; how this same Yermolay bought the estate ... where my grandfather and father were slaves... (Senelick 1029)

Если бы отец мой и дед встали из гробов и посмотрели на все происшествие,
как их Ермолай, битый, малограмотный Ермолай, который зимой босиком
бегал, как этот самый Ермолай купил имение ... где дед и отец были рабами ...

In Act 3, Lopakhin, who has just arrived by train from the auction, exudes a newfound sense of opportunity for those formerly in bondage under the old aristocracy. This is a moment of pure delight ("My God, Lord, the cherry orchard's mine. Mine!... I'm drunk, out of my mind" (Senelick 1029) for the son of a serf who has obviously benefited from the influx of modern economics into rural Russia. This was a movement of people, ideas, and goods that was dependent upon the new railway system developing across the countryside. Readers must, however, be careful to remember that Lopakhin's success and the success of the new merchant class is only the beginning and not the end of what Dr. Astrov had imagined possible with the influx of machines into the countryside. Unfortunately, Lopakhin's plans for the estate do not include schools, hospitals, and highways to alleviate the position of Russia's poor. Instead, he will chop down the cherry orchard and build small country dachas for summertime visitors. According to Baehr, these summertime renters will most likely be petty bourgeois clones of Lopakhin himself (Baehr 108). Essentially, the success and upward mobility of the poor has ended with the establishment of the new merchant class. One stagnant society, the old aristocracy, is being replaced by a new class that in its own way appears stagnant. Chekhov himself, in a personal letter to Konstantin Stanislavsky in 1903, wrote that "Lopakhin may be a merchant, but he is a decent person in every sense; his behavior

must be entirely proper, cultivated and free of pettiness or clowning" (Karlinsky 461). Therefore, his character is not meant as a condemnation of the merchant profession, and readers are encouraged to admire his success. Lopakhin's personal success as a young enterprising capitalist is only one of the possibilities offered by modernity. It should not be interpreted as the apex of change.

The train has arrived bringing the influx of new people, talents, technology, and economic systems, but as Lindheim pointed out, there must be a simultaneous advancement in the nation's intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual life. The elevation of men like Lopakhin from the bowels of serfdom to the forefront of a quickly emerging bourgeois merchant class is only a small glimpse of the possibilities offered by modernization. Dr. Astrov outlined the goal of new schools, factories, and mills that elevate the lower classes by making them healthier, more prosperous, and more intelligent. Unfortunately, we only see a small amount of that potential being achieved in *The Cherry Orchard*. Moreover, the play's focus on an individual noble family, who has lost their ancestral estate, reminds readers that Russia is losing a way of life marked by "love, generosity, kindness, a love of nature and beauty, and an esteem for culture and history (Baehr 101)."

As we have seen, the representations of trains in Chekhov are faced with problems similar to that of factories or steamships. At times they can be gargantuan metal beasts breathing "crimson fire" tainted by the social sphere in which they find themselves. More specifically, the locomotive can be seen manifesting the "tone and spirit" of a character ("Country Cottage"), the twist and turn of plot developments ("The Murder"), and the atmosphere of a surrounding corrupt social order ("Cold

Blood"). These frightening descriptions are woven into each work's narration giving rise to what Chudakov described as the "syntactic whole." In addition, the train can be seen as a symbol for the arrival of "modernity" into the Russian rural countryside. In the "Country Cottage," Varya painted a beautiful landscape for readers in which the railroad carried "humanity" and "civilization" into the countryside. Unfortunately, the realization of this hope and desire as espoused by Varya or men like Dr. Astrov for a better future does not always come to fruition. We see the arrival of modernity in *The Cherry Orchard*, but it does not entail new schools, mills, and factories that raise all the lower classes to prosperity and health. Instead, it means the death of the old land owning class, who despite their past transgressions, esteemed history and nature in a way that Lopakhin deems unworthy for business. Instead, summer cottages will go up and the cherry orchards will be cut down. The railroad will accept bribes, animals will be neglected, and business will generally suffer despite the modern benefits offered by mass transit of freight by railway, and the pristine natural beauty of the country may be impacted by the encroachment of man and machine. Ultimately, reality of modernity's arrival does not necessarily align with the hopes and aspirations for its potential.

Conclusion: Machines as Harbingers of Hope

This analysis of machines in Chekhov's fiction has revealed the truly complex nature of their appearance, representation, and symbolism. They constitute a presence that cannot be easily categorized as denoting an enthusiastic reception of modernity's arrival or a condemnation of their existence. Nor is the appearance and description of machines solely a narrative device, merely manifesting a story or character's tone and spirit. These meanings and uses are all relevant and contain some element of truth, but they are only single pieces of a much larger picture. A holistic interpretation of their presence in Chekhov's fiction develops a message of cautious optimism and hope for the future. Machines can be viewed as objects of potentiality. I have demonstrated this potential within individual stories and reinforced it by a rounded survey of Chekhov's fiction containing machine references. We have seen that the railroad is a potential conduit of "humanity" and "civilization," but that same conduit for enlightenment can be abused and corrupted to the detriment of man and animal if misappropriated for greedy objectives ("Cold Blood"). A similar duality is revealed with factories. On one hand, readers are shown ruined landscapes ("The Ravine"), brackish waters ("Gooseberries"), and detestable working conditions ("A Doctor's Visit" & "A Woman's Kingdom"). On the other hand, however, factories almost always appear with a mention of the commodity they produce, reminding readers in a subtle manner that these industrial complexes have a very real and tangible purpose for existing. Additionally, Dr. Astrov's speech on the natural destruction of forests includes the

hopeful presentiment that such destruction can be rational and permissive when it runs concomitant with the construction of beneficial factories and mills. At the very least, this appears to posit the notion that Chekhov's fiction accepts the potentiality of useful factories. Thus, his fiction does not stand in opposition to the factory itself, but instead to the harmful atmosphere created around factories in which human beings wreak havoc on each other and the environment through misuse and dereliction of societal compassion ("A Doctor's Visit" and "A Woman's Kindgom"). This is a problem that remains unsolved in his works, but is posed for the reader to contemplate.

Though Chekhov's fiction never achieves an easily discernable conclusion on the often-negative effects wrought by machines on the natural and human landscapes surrounding them, readers are given signs of hope. This hope subtly pervades many of Chekhov's natural depictions of machines blended seamlessly into stunning natural vistas. Readers witness steamships that gradually appear and then fade into peaceful and serene natural backgrounds ("Lady with a Dog" and *The Steppe*), factory windows that shine merrily while larks sing above ("A Medical Case"), and locomotives enjoying the simple freedom of movement while the sun plays upon the snow ("Cold Blood"). These depictions evince the "potentiality" for machine, man, and nature to coexist in a beautiful and tender harmony. Ultimately, the potential of technology and industrial age modernity become a question of man's "rational" use of machines to better himself, his society, and the world around him. Machines provide the means of achieving Dr. Astrov's dream of a new age in which schools, hospitals, mills, and factories can raise the health, intellect, and

prosperity of all people. The realization of such a dream would arouse "astonishment," "splendor," and even "rapture" not only in Dr. Andrei Yefimych, who had witnessed a comparable revolution in medicine, but would also impact his creator Dr. Anton Chekhov in a similar manner.

Lastly, the conclusion of this thesis reiterates the well known paradigm in Chekhov's fiction that applying general societal conceptions to specific situations is problematic at best. The individual depictions of machines discussed above expand upon this pattern, while offering a look into an area that is often glossed over by critics as they attempt to present Chekhov's industrializing Russia in largely pessimistic terms.

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